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SUBJECT: EP PRESIDENT POTTERING ON GAZA, ENERGY, AND  
RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

REF: BRUSSELS 28

Classified By: Ambassador Kristen Silverberg for reasons 1.4 b and d

¶1. (U) During a January 7 meeting with Ambassador Silverberg, Hans-Gert Pottering, President of the European Parliament, discussed the Israel-Gaza crisis, the Russia-Ukraine energy dispute, and freedom of religion in the Middle East. Pottering requested the meeting with the Ambassador in order to reiterate his invitation to President-elect Obama to address the European Parliament during his early-April 2009 trip to Europe, reported reftel.

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Conflict in Gaza  
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¶2. (C) Pottering relayed that he had just spoken to Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Salam Fayyad before meeting with the Ambassador. According to Pottering, Fayyad sought an immediate cease fire by both sides, with issues like smuggling and border crossings to be solved after hostilities had stopped. Pottering said that he agreed with Fayyad's views, saying that &if Fayyad says these things, we should listen.<sup>8</sup> Pottering called for a &massive<sup>8</sup> UN force to be deployed in order to enforce a cease fire, saying that it would have more credibility than unilateral action from just one or a few nations. Pottering agreed with U.S. views that smuggling must end, but disagreed with the Ambassador's point that a cease fire must be durable and not return the situation to the status quo ante. Pottering contended that moderate Arab states would come under public pressure to back an unconditional cease fire if we were to pursue a durable cease fire that had conditions attached.

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Ukraine-Russia Gas Dispute  
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¶3. (C) Pottering said that Gazprom CEO Alexei Miller had requested an appointment with him for January 8, the next day, but did not elaborate on the current crisis. In response to a question from the Ambassador, Pottering said that the EP was a strong supporter of plans for the EU to diversify its sources of energy, including the Nabucco pipeline. He also reported that a prominent minister of state from a North Stream bordering country had labeled North Stream &the biggest case of corruption in Europe during the postwar period.<sup>8</sup>

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Turkey, Religious Freedom  
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¶4. (C) Pottering mentioned that Turkish Prime Minister Recep Erdogan would be at the parliament on January 19 in

order to meet with him, and political group leaders. Pottering said that the EP is generally in favor of Turkish accession, but that he personally is against it. Pottering also said that before the Christmas holiday he had traveled to Oman, UAE, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia. He was struck by the open Christian worship in Oman, UAE, and Bahrain, and said that he attended Catholic mass at a church in Oman (where the priest led a prayer for the Sultan). Pottering said that he was surprised that there were no non-Muslim houses of worship in Saudi Arabia. Rejecting Saudi arguments that Catholics would not permit a mosque in the Vatican, Pottering pressed for the United States to lean harder on Saudi Arabia to permit more religious freedom.

SILVERBERG

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